

Louisiana Pastors call for Federal Leadership and Support

Pastors from PICO LIFT (Louisiana Interfaiths Together) are in Washington for meetings with the Louisiana Congressional Delegation, key Katrina-related Congressional Committees, the White House and FEMA. Their message is that lives are in limbo across Louisiana waiting for the federal government to act on its promises to the state.

PICO LIFT brings together 100 churches in New Orleans and across Louisiana. As the largest statewide grassroots organizing effort in the state, PICO LIFT has been working since 1988 to make a better life for families. It is a part of the PICO National Network founded in 1972, which represents one million families in 150 cities and towns across America.

In September PICO LIFT met with more than 3,000 evacuees and host families to hear their needs and stories. These meetings at kitchen tables and church halls resulted in a five point COVENANT TO REBUILD LOUISIANA, which was signed by Governor Blanco and other state and local officials.

PICO LIFT pastors came to Washington, DC in September to offer advice on recovery and rebuilding. They are back to express the frustration of their parishioners in the lack of federal leadership. Families and churches cannot move forward until Washington decides how New Orleans will be protected and what federal resources will be available to rebuild.

Families that have lost everything material hold onto their faith in a better future. Those churches and families who want to return to New Orleans have a right to.

In meetings with members of Congress PICO LIFT clergy are focused on three issues from the Covenant to Rebuilding Louisiana:

- **JOBS:** Assuring that FEMA has a proactive strategy to guarantee that displaced families and Louisiana residents obtain the jobs and benefits of federal investment.
- **INSURANCE:** Assuring that families who lost their homes are made whole. Many of these families were told by the federal government that they did not need flood insurance because the levees would protect them.
- **HOUSING:** Assuring that there is federal support for housing and community development so that families can rebuild their homes and neighborhoods.

Participating clergy

Pastor Gregory V. White, Beech Grove Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, Inc.

Pastor Steven Beckham, The First Little Rock Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, LA

Deacon Allen Stevens, St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church, 9th Ward – New Orleans, LA

Pastor Tommie N. Gipson, Jr., Donaldson Chapel Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, LA

Rev. Michael Jacques, SSE, Pastor – St. Peter Claver Church, New Orleans, LA

For more information visit www.piconetwork.org/katrina.asp or call (734) 255-4029.